



Websites

The 7th Framework: cooperation, ideas, people & capacities

The EU Commission unveils its plans for the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), from 2007-13, a €73bn budget based on four specific programmes: 'Cooperation' is collaborative transnational research; 'Ideas' covers basic research implemented through a EU Research Council; 'People' includes Marie Curie actions and other initiatives; and 'Capacities' encompasses support to research infrastructures, regions of knowledge & small/medium enterprises.

The stress is that collaborative research, under the Cooperation heading, 'will constitute the bulk and core of EU research funding.' Nearly €45bn of total €73bn would be channelled towards this priority under the plans. As well as collaborative research, Cooperation will cover Joint Technology Initiatives, coordination of national research programmes and international cooperation.

There are nine thematic areas for collabora-



EU Commissioner for Science & Research Janenez Potocnik to focus on "Cooperation, Ideas, People and Capacities."

tive research: health; food, agriculture and biotechnology; ICT; nanosciences, nanotechnologies, materials & new production technologies; energy; environment (climate change); transport (aeronautics); socio-economic sciences and the humanities; and security and space research.

As with FP6, the largest of these thematic areas in budgetary terms is ICT, proposed allocation of €12.7bn over seven years. Health gets nearly €8.4bn, followed by nanosciences with just under €5bn. The newly created security and space research priority is set to be the fifth largest, with a budget of €4bn, while the new thematic area, socio-economic sciences and the

humanities, (who has ever bothered with them?) will get a meagre €797m.

At this stage the themes are broadly defined to adapt to needs and opportunities as they arise during the lifetime of FP7. Under ICT, for example, activities include the integration of technologies into personal environments and robotic systems, ICT for health, mobility and inclusion, future and emerging technologies.

With the Ideas programme, the funding of individual projects suggested by researchers on subjects of their choice is foreseen. The programme implemented by an ERC independently of the rest of the FP7, with a budget over seven years of €12bn.

The People programme will cover initial training of researchers (through Marie Curie networks), life-long training & career development, industry-academia pathways and partnerships, & international activities including incoming and outgoing fellowships and the exchange of researchers. This budget allocation is the lowest at €7.2 bn.

Capacities will target the optimal use and development of research infrastructures, strengthening the innovative capacities of SMEs, development of regional research clusters, improving research potential in EU convergence regions, and improving integration of science and society. Proposed budget of €7.5bn.

Compared with FP6, proposals place far less emphasis on specific funding mechanisms. For transnational projects under the nine thematic areas, three main instruments are identified: collaborative projects, from small-scale, focused research to large integrating projects; Networks of Excellence bringing together a number of institutions in a given field; and coordination and support actions, as networking, exchanges and access to research infrastructures.

Other funding mechanisms could include individual projects - primarily for basic research under the activities of the ERC -

Marie Curie actions, and research for the benefit of specific groups (in particular SMEs). Mechanisms to support multi-finance large-scale initiatives on the basis of Council & Parliament decisions, meanwhile, include Article 169 of the Treaty, Joint Technology Initiatives, and development of infrastructures through Article 171 of the Treaty.

Away from the four specific programmes, the proposals state that all research activities undertaken in FP7 'must be carried out in compliance with fundamental ethical principles.' An interim evaluation of FP7 and its specific programmes is to be undertaken by no later than 2010, with a full external evaluation of the rationale, implementation and achievements coming two years after its completion.

In the consultation process preceding the proposals, a number Member States called for the Joint Research Centre to compete equally with national institutions to provide scientific support to EU policy making. But the JRC's independence of national or private interests and its technical expertise enable it to best build consensus between stakeholders & policy makers, at EU level.

The non-nuclear activities of the JRC will target prosperity in a knowledge-intensive society, solidarity and responsible management of resources, security and freedom, and EU's role as a world partner. The plans state: 'The JRC will actively pursue promoting the integration of new member states and candidate countries in its activities to the level currently enjoyed by the EU15.'

'In order to strengthen the diffusion and use of the output of EU research, the dissemination of knowledge and transfer of results, including to policy makers, will be supported in all thematic areas, including through the funding of networking initiatives, seminars and events, assistance by external experts and information and electronic services, in particular CORDIS.'

Web: www.cordis.lu/fp7/Subject